

To Chairman Genachowski and whomever else this may concern at the FCC,

The Internet has made amazing things possible, like freeing the Jena 6, electing President Obama, even creating ColorOfChange. None of it could have happened without an "open" Internet: one where Internet service providers are not allowed to interfere with what is seen and by whom.

I applaud the FCC for moving forward on this and urge the FCC in light of the decision in Comcast v. FCC to reclassify broadband as an information service with a telecommunications service AND restore common carrier regulations to regulate broadband as a utility thus protecting Net Neutrality and reasserting your legal authority to do so. We have to stop cable company ISPs from using their high speed Internet business to subsidize and protect their digital cable TV businesses which face criticism for higher rates each year etc.

We have to stop ISP discrimination!

I urge the FCC to side with the public in endorsing strong Net Neutrality rules that protect consumers.

It is worth noting that now, Comcast, AT&T, and Verizon ? the most powerful broadband providers ? are trying to fundamentally change the way the Internet works. They're seeking to make even bigger profits by acting as gatekeepers over what you can see and do online. If they succeed, the Internet would be more like radio and television: a few major corporations would control which voices are heard most easily, and it would be much harder for grassroots groups, individuals, and small businesses to compete with large corporations and well-funded special interests.

The FCC wants to do the right thing and keep the Internet open, but the big providers have been attacking their efforts, with help from Black leaders who have financial ties to the industry. And a court ruling yesterday just made the FCC's job even tougher¹. If the FCC is to preserve an open Internet, they will have to boldly assert their authority and press even harder. It's why they need to hear directly from everyday people, especially from Black folks, about the importance of an open Internet, now.

For people of color, and in minorities it is crucial the Internet remain neutral as the FCC seeks to implement its ambitious National Broadband Plan to expand broadband Internet access into unserved communities. Everyone in the country regardless of skin color, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, political beliefs should have equal affordable access to broadband Internet, and be able to have broadband if they want it regardless of whether they live in urban or rural areas, or how much income they make. That is why the bandwidth caps incumbent ISPs now want to impose should also be prevented when unnecessary.

There is too much inequality in America even today -- the news media is failing to keep all Americans properly informed -- with most people relying on corporate media and the corporate giants (whether they push a liberal agenda or a conservative agenda like MSNBC or FOX News) talking about moral values are neglecting to address issues of poverty in the country. Everyone should be able to have equal, affordable access to high speed Internet regardless of income meaning ISPs should not charge users for more bandwidth usage -- causing those with access unable to pay for more bandwidth to be unable to fully benefit from faster Internet while allowing the rich to do so.

When all users should have the same access regardless of how much money they make.

For people of color this really is crucial. For the first time in history we can communicate with a global audience ? for entertainment, education, or political organizing ? without prohibitive costs, or mediation by gatekeepers in government or industry. That's how ColorOfChange became successful: because of the low cost of starting up online, we could start small and grow without spending a lot of money. The strength of our ideas, not the size of our budget, determined our success. In television, radio and print, this can't happen, because access is determined by big media corporations seeking to turn a profit.

AT&T, Comcast, and Verizon are spending millions of dollars lobbying to create a new system where they can charge large fees to speed up some data while leaving those who can't afford to pay in the slow lane.² Such a system could end the Internet as we know it ? giving wealthier voices on the Internet a much bigger megaphone than poorer voices, and stunting the Internet's amazing equalizing potential.

Buying the support of Black organizations?

President Obama strongly supports net neutrality, and so do most members of the FCC. With so much at stake for Black communities, you would expect Black leaders and civic organizations to line up in support of an open Internet.

But instead, a group of Black civic organizations is challenging the adoption of net neutrality rules. Some of the groups are nothing more than front groups for the phone and cable companies. Others, however, are major civil rights groups ? and all of them have significant financial ties to the nation's biggest Internet service providers.

For example, AT&T donated half a million dollars last year to the NAACP and led a drive to raise \$5 million more,³ and boasts of donating nearly \$3 million over the last ten years to a number of Black-led organizations.⁴ Verizon, meanwhile, recently gave The National Urban League and the National Council of La Raza a \$2.2 million grant.⁵ Comcast is one of the National Urban League's ?national

partners? (Comcast Executive Vice President David Cohen now sits on the NUL's Board of Trustees),⁶ and the NUL's 2008 annual report notes that Comcast donated over \$1 million that year.⁷ Many of these groups have now filed letters with the FCC opposing or cautioning against net neutrality,^{8,9,10,11} and the Internet service providers are using the groups' support to promote their agenda in Washington.^{12,13}

The main argument put forth by these groups is that net neutrality rules could limit minority access to the Internet and widen the digital divide. They say that unless we allow Internet service providers to make bigger profits by acting as gatekeepers online, they won't expand Internet access in under-served communities. In other words, if Comcast – whose broadband Internet business was recently earning 80 percent profit margins ¹⁴ – can increase its profits under a system without net neutrality, then it will all of a sudden invest in expanding Internet access in our communities.

– This argument has been debunked^{15, 16} – it doesn't make any sense from a business or economic perspective, and it doesn't reflect history. Expanding access to high speed Internet is an extremely important goal, and we are fully in support of it. But allowing the phone and cable companies to make more money by acting as toll-takers on the Internet has nothing to do with reaching that goal. Businesses invest where they can maximize their profits, period. Internet service providers are already making huge profits,¹⁷ and if they believed that investing in low-income communities made good business sense, they would already be doing it. The idea that making even more money is suddenly going to make them care about our communities is ridiculous.

When groups endorsing Net Neutrality like Color of Change have asked civil rights groups to back up their arguments against net neutrality, not a single one has been able to explain how they make any sense, without appealing to discredited, industry-funded studies.¹⁸ And no one can offer any evidence for the claim that protecting net neutrality will hurt efforts to expand Internet access.

– Some of these civil rights groups are quick to say that they don't really oppose net neutrality, they only intend to raise questions or concerns they deem important. But the – concerns – raised by these groups sound so similar to talking points from the Internet service providers that both the FCC and the news media have interpreted them as against net neutrality. And these organizations have done little or nothing to clarify the record.

Please don't buy phony talking points against Net Neutrality. It is sad to hear some civil rights groups tricked by the incumbent ISPs touting the talking points of those ISPs rather than standing with us for Net Neutrality which is what we need to do.